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# Operations of the Voluntary Fund for Financial and Technical Assistance in the Implementation of the Universal Periodic Review

**Report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights**

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# I. Introduction

## A. Submission of the report

1. The present report is submitted in accordance with Human Rights Council decision 17/119, in which the Secretariat was requested to provide an annual written update on the operations of the Voluntary Fund for Financial and Technical Assistance in the Implementation of the Universal Periodic Review and on the resources available to it. The report was prepared by the Secretariat in consultation with the Board of Trustees of the Fund. The report provides an overview of contributions and expenditure as at 31 December 2016, together with a description of action taken since the submission of the previous report (A/HRC/32/28) to operationalize the Fund. It also provides a description of the results achieved through the various activities funded by the Voluntary Fund during 2016.

## B. Background

2. In its resolution 6/17, the Human Rights Council requested the Secretary-General to establish a voluntary fund for financial and technical assistance in order to provide, in conjunction with multilateral funding mechanisms, a source of financial and technical assistance to help countries implement recommendations emanating from the universal periodic review in consultation with, and with the consent of, the country concerned. In its resolution 16/21, the Council requested that the Voluntary Fund be strengthened and operationalized in order to provide a source of financial and technical assistance to help countries, in particular least developed countries and small island developing States, to implement the recommendations emanating from their review. The Council also requested that a board of trustees be established in accordance with the rules of the United Nations.

3. The Voluntary Fund was established in 2009. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) has continued to provide financial and technical assistance to States that have requested or consented to receiving such support. Support has been provided in the spirit of the founding resolution of the universal periodic review, in which it is stated that the objectives of the review include the improvement of the human rights situation on the ground (Human Rights Council resolution 5/1, annex, para. 4 (a)), the fulfilment of the State's human rights obligations and commitments (ibid., para. 4 (b)) and the enhancement of the State's capacity and of technical assistance, in consultation with, and with the consent of, the State concerned (ibid., para. 4 (c)).

# II. Operationalization of the Voluntary Fund

## A. Board of Trustees of the Voluntary Fund

4. The members of the Board of Trustees of the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Technical Cooperation in the Field of Human Rights also serve as the Board of Trustees for the Voluntary Fund for Financial and Technical Assistance in the Implementation of the Universal Periodic Review (see A/HRC/29/22, para. 4). They are tasked with overseeing the management of the latter Fund. The members are Marieclaire Acosta Urquidi (Mexico), Lin Lim (Malaysia), Valeriya Lutkovska (Ukraine), Christopher Sidoti (Australia) and Esi Sutherland-Addy (Ghana). The Board elected Mr. Sidoti as Chair for the period 30 June 2016 to the end of the Board's seventh session, held in Geneva in March 2017; at that session, the Board elected Ms. Acosta Urquidi as Chair.

5. In close consultation with the various sections of OHCHR, the Board of Trustees focuses its attention on broadly guiding the operationalization of the Voluntary Fund for Financial and Technical Assistance in the Implementation of the Universal Periodic Review by providing policy advice.

6. Since the submission of the previous report, the Board of Trustees has undertaken a field mission to the OHCHR office in Guatemala, in October 2016, and has held its regular annual session, its seventh, in Geneva in March 2017. At that session, the Board had strategic discussions with the relevant OHCHR officers on follow-up support to identify strategic options for OHCHR provision of technical assistance and cooperation aimed at assisting States to implement more effectively recommendations emanating from the universal periodic review and other international human rights mechanisms at the country level. The Board will develop the strategic options over the next six months for further consideration at its next session.

7. During the session, the Board of Trustees acknowledged the results achieved by its follow-up support strategy focusing on national follow-up mechanisms and processes at the country level. It highlighted the need for OHCHR to articulate a strategic vision for follow-up support focusing on and leading to better implementation on the ground of recommendations emanating from international human rights mechanisms. The Board strongly encouraged OHCHR to explore ways of providing more focused technical assistance and cooperation aimed at assisting States to implement specific key human rights recommendations and address specific issues, in accordance with the priorities established in the framework of the OHCHR Management Plan 2018-2021 which is currently under development.

## B. Strategic vision

8. As noted in previous reports (A/HRC/26/54, A/HRC/29/22 and A/HRC/32/28), OHCHR has been developing the capacity to provide increased support to States in their efforts to implement the outcome of the universal periodic review and other international human rights mechanisms. That effort has been anchored in a holistic and integrated approach that allows OHCHR to provide technical assistance and support that takes into account the recommendations of the universal periodic review, the treaty bodies and the special procedures. Such an integrated approach provides States with a significant opportunity to address the key human rights issues identified in the recommendations emanating from international human rights mechanisms.

9. OHCHR has been making every effort to render its follow-up support more proactive, systematic and results-oriented. To that end, it has been engaging States in their efforts to implement the recommendations of international human rights mechanisms by providing support directly through its field presences or by ensuring the integration of support in United Nations country team programming on follow-up.

10. Thus far, OHCHR has focused its support on establishing or strengthening national mechanisms and processes for follow-up. Key elements identified for more effective follow-up at the national level include a well-functioning inter-institutional body, an implementation action plan that clearly identifies achievable results and priorities, national government agencies responsible for implementation, and indicators and timelines against which to measure impact. OHCHR has made every effort to maximize its effectiveness. Support from the Voluntary Fund to strengthen national follow-up mechanisms and processes has been closely aligned and coordinated with the support provided to States under the treaty body capacity-building programme on national mechanisms for reporting and follow-up.

11. OHCHR has been increasingly providing support to address key thematic human rights issues identified in recommendations from international human rights mechanisms as priority issues for implementation on the ground.

12. In order to provide more effective support to States in implementing their human rights commitments and obligations, OHCHR will continue to adapt and revitalize its strategic vision to support States in the preparation of their national reports and the implementation of the recommendations emanating from the universal periodic review.

13. In line with the terms of reference of the Voluntary Fund, it is essential to ensure that the universal periodic review outcomes are well integrated and mainstreamed into the

United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks, the integrated strategic frameworks in peacekeeping missions and in national development plans, and that the information on review outcomes is widely disseminated.

14. A thorough analysis of the universal periodic review outcomes and those of other human rights mechanisms, such as the concluding observations of treaty bodies, the findings and recommendations of special procedures and the findings of commissions of inquiry mandated by the Human Rights Council, may also serve as a tool for conflict prevention, providing an indication of potential risk factors and necessary measures to be taken by the international community to adequately address them.

15. In addition, it should be highlighted that the universal periodic review outcomes may constitute an essential element to be considered in relation to implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. Hence, follow-up support through technical assistance and cooperation to States should be aimed at fully integrating the universal periodic review outcomes into national frameworks and processes for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

## III. Results achieved through the implementation of activities supported by the Voluntary Fund during 2016

16. The present section provides examples of the results achieved through a range of activities aimed at supporting States in implementing the recommendations of international human rights mechanisms in an integrated manner on the ground.

### Africa

17. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, an integrated national action plan for the implementation of recommendations from all United Nations human rights protection mechanisms was drafted, with technical and financial support from the United Nations Joint Human Rights Office. A four-day workshop, partly facilitated by an expert from the Subregional Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Central Africa in Yaoundé, resulted in a draft action plan, which is awaiting finalization and approval by all stakeholders. The validation process was expected to be finalized during the first quarter of 2017.

18. In the Niger, OHCHR supported the Government in organizing two workshops to disseminate the outcomes of the universal periodic review, which involved representatives of the Government and State institutions, the media, civil society and the National Human Rights Commission. OHCHR also assisted the Government, led by the Minister of Justice, to prepare and adopt an action plan on follow-up to the review recommendations, contributing in particular to the development of the matrix and narrative of the action plan. In partnership with other United Nations entities, OHCHR contributed to the consolidation of the dialogue between civil society, the National Human Rights Commission and the Government on the recommendations. OHCHR also trained 20 members of an interministerial committee, including eight women, on the guidelines for the preparation of the initial report to be submitted under the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child.

### Asia and the Pacific

19. In Afghanistan, technical assistance was provided to strengthen governmental capacity to prepare State party reports for submission to the treaty bodies and to coordinate the implementation of their recommendations. The human rights unit of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) contributed to discussions held on 13 to 15 November 2016 on national and shadow reporting with relevant government and non-governmental actors in connection with reporting to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. Similarly, UNAMA/OHCHR started work on its own update report on torture for the Committee against Torture. UNAMA/OHCHR also worked with the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination as it drafted its list of issues to urge Afghanistan to submit a report after over 30 years of non-reporting. A

network of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) also completed a shadow report for the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and was offered comments and suggestions by UNAMA/OHCHR; the Government was expected to submit its initial report in early 2017.

20. In Cambodia, OHCHR, in close partnership with civil society, has monitored the implementation of the Law on Associations and Non-governmental Organizations since its adoption in 2015. It successfully contributed to increasing knowledge among civil society through a series of training courses partly supported by the Voluntary Fund, aimed at raising awareness about the right to peaceful assembly under international human rights law and domestic legislation and building local capacity to comply with the law. OHCHR also produced a Khmer version of the checklist drawn up by the Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association on the proper management of assemblies. OHCHR supported a symposium on the six-month review of the Trade Union Law, which brought together 129 representatives from trade unions across sectors. They discussed the challenges faced under the new law and made recommendations for amendments to it with a view to improving its compliance with the country's obligations under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Labour Organization conventions.

21. In the Philippines, two bills aimed at establishing a national preventive mechanism under the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment were filed in the Seventeenth Congress and one bill was discussed by the House Committee on Human Rights in November 2016. Through funds allocated by the Voluntary Fund, originally intended for 2015 but deferred to 2016 at the request of the National Human Rights Commission, the Human Rights Adviser supported the organization of a national workshop held by the Commission in December 2016 on advancing the establishment of a national preventive mechanism.

22. OHCHR provided extensive support to Samoa before, during and after its second universal periodic review in the form of a United Nations Volunteer/universal periodic review coordinator funded by the Voluntary Fund. In order to support the functions of the national mechanism for reporting and follow-up, the volunteer based in Samoa designed an implementation monitoring and data-collection website application, obtaining funding for its development from the United Nations Development Programme and New Zealand. The application, entitled "Sadata", was under development and would be integrated into the work of the national mechanism for reporting and follow-up in early 2017.

23. In Thailand, OHCHR organized a workshop on the ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment and the establishment of the national preventive mechanism. The programme served as a useful means to raise Thai officials' awareness of the importance of ratification of that instrument as part of its efforts to end the use of torture. The Government has agreed to ratify the Optional Protocol by 2017. In addition, OHCHR organized a five-day training session for the Royal Thai Police on law enforcement and human rights, which raised police officers' awareness of fundamental human rights. OHCHR also organized a high-level discussion with senior police officials, which was instrumental in raising human rights and policing concerns at the leadership level of the Royal Thai Police. OHCHR plans to continue its engagement with the Royal Thai Police on capacity development in 2017.

**Europe and Central Asia**

24. In Serbia, the Government approved a new housing bill in November 2016 and sent it to the parliament for approval. Consultation, outreach and training measures were supported by the Voluntary Fund. OHCHR provided the Government with extensive comments on multiple drafts of the bill. It aimed to enhance the holistic human rights character of the bill and establish a strong legal basis for good human rights-based development of the Serbian housing sector on the basis of the recommendations made by the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living, and on the right to non-discrimination in this context, in the report of her mission in May 2015 (see A/HRC/31/54/Add.2). OHCHR also provided a non-paper to the Government on normative requirements in the area of the right to adequate housing and

best practices in that regard, following up on that report. Legal provisions on human rights in the context of resettlement aimed particularly at the Roma community were included in the bill, including requirements for social inclusion, such as access to mainstream schooling and the labour market. The bill sent to the parliament also includes a number of safeguards in the context of evictions, which have not previously formed part of Serbian law.

25. The Government of Tajikistan, with the support of OHCHR, made considerable efforts to improve the inter-agency mechanism for the implementation of international human rights obligations, including by reviewing its regulations to expand the role of civil society. That included advocacy on enhancing the mechanism's functions on monitoring and follow-up by appointing human rights focal points at the ministerial and municipal levels, launching and regularly updating the website of the commission on the implementation of international obligations in the field of human rights, and holding public consultations with civil society organizations. Furthermore, OHCHR advocacy has also resulted in the Government developing a comprehensive national action plan.

26. In the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the expert working group of the national mechanism for reporting and follow-up (the government intersectoral body) increased its skills and competence to coordinate State reporting and follow-up efforts. Through workshops, OHCHR helped the working group to acquire skills for clustering and prioritizing, as well as applying an integrated approach to the implementation of recommendations using the OHCHR human rights indicators framework. As a result, the working group has developed a tool to cluster all the recommendations and has started drafting an integrated implementation plan.

**Middle East and North Africa**

27. In Iraq, OHCHR provided technical and other assistance to the Government in the preparation of reports under various human rights treaties. It also provided considerable support, capacity-building and technical advice to civil society organizations on shadow reporting, and to the national High Commission for Human Rights on submission of reports to treaty bodies. Iraq has not yet responded to the universal periodic review recommendation to develop an implementation action plan for the review recommendations. OHCHR negotiated with the Government of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq to hold a series of consultations with relevant stakeholders, including civil society, on developing an implementation action plan to implement the review recommendations that are relevant to the region pursuant to its jurisdiction. The action plan was due to be endorsed and launched in early 2017.

28. In Mauritania, the participation of women in the discussions on the effective implementation of universal periodic review recommendations and the drafting of the national development strategy 2016-2030 was reinforced through workshops with civil society, targeting women. As a result, human rights NGOs are aware of the relationship between human rights and the Sustainable Development Goals, the process of national prioritization and their relevance for the national development strategy 2016-2030. OHCHR provided ongoing training and capacity-building to the ministerial unit responsible for drafting that strategy and the consultants working on the different development assistance framework-related documents. As coordinator of the human rights and gender thematic group under the United Nations Development Assistance Framework, OHCHR raised United Nations colleagues' awareness about human rights mainstreaming and initiated a joint meeting with the evaluation and monitoring group.

**Latin America and the Caribbean**

29. In Argentina, OHCHR provided technical assistance to the Federal Human Rights Council to strengthen SIPEN, the national periodic reports system that is in place to monitor compliance with recommendations and reporting to human rights mechanisms.

30. During 2016, the human rights officer based in Barbados conducted seminars across the Eastern Caribbean for government officials and civil society on the United Nations international human rights mechanisms with a focus on the universal periodic review and the treaty bodies. The officer provided assistance on the establishment of a national

mechanism for reporting and follow-up, and supported the Governments of Barbados, Dominica, Saint Kitts and Nevis and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines in the process of strengthening their national mechanisms for reporting and follow-up to recommendations from human rights mechanisms. The officer also provided assistance to the Governments of Barbados, Saint Kitts and Nevis and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines to establish a plan of action to implement recommendations emanating from the universal periodic review.

31. In the Plurinational State of Bolivia, improvements were made to SIPLUS, the system for following up, monitoring and gathering statistics on human rights recommendations made to the country by mechanisms within the universal system of human rights protection, following the system's initial launch in December 2015. With the support of OHCHR, the web design and operational system were improved in order to ensure that everyone has easy access to all the human rights recommendations made to the country, as well as the State's follow-up actions. Furthermore, the database connects the actions to human rights indicators that were developed by the Ministry of Justice and the National Institute of Statistics. The new version of the system was officially launched on 6 December 2016.

32. In Brazil, the national programme for the protection of human rights defenders has been severely weakened under the new administration, and its future remains uncertain. OHCHR piloted an activity in Brazil that planted the seed for a joint Inter-American Commission on Human Rights/OHCHR regional initiative on human rights defenders. OHCHR prepared an analysis of the legal, institutional and public policy framework, which identified the groups at risk and the root causes of violations of the rights of human rights defenders in the country and the specific challenges they face. It included groups that are invisible in terms of statistics and reporting, such as women and urban human rights defenders. The analysis included a set of recommendations and called for the United Nations system in Brazil to take a more active role on that issue, particularly in the case of reprisals.

33. Chile signed a cooperation agreement with SIMORE, the system set up in Paraguay to monitor the human rights recommendations it received, and was developing a mechanism to follow up on the recommendations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child. OHCHR recently received a request to support follow-up to the recommendations of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. OHCHR hopes that, with the mandate of the Deputy Ministry of Human Rights fully established, Chile will move to a more integrated approach to include recommendations from all mechanisms. OHCHR has been discussing with the new Deputy Minister priorities for the mandate, which includes the preparation of a national human rights action plan.

34. In Costa Rica, OHCHR and the United Nations country team continued supporting the national reporting and follow-up mechanism, in particular in the adoption of the 2016 workplan and the establishment of priority initiatives in the area of non-discrimination. OHCHR support enabled the compilation of existing human rights programmes/public policies and the establishment of a permanent mechanism for civil society participation therein. OHCHR also initiated preparations for the piloting of the multilingual universal database to follow up on the implementation of the recommendations of the human rights mechanisms.

35. In the Dominican Republic, progress was made in strengthening the Ombudsman's Office, the national human rights institution, and in developing a national human rights action plan. Progress was also made in terms of setting up a permanent, participatory and strengthened human rights mechanism within the Executive to effectively engage with international human rights mechanisms, including by fulfilling reporting obligations and follow-up to and implementation of recommendations. The official launch of the action plan, originally scheduled for December 2016, was postponed to the first quarter of 2017. The approval of the action plan will require the revision and reinforcement of the inter-institutional Commission on Human Rights, which is called to play an active role in following up the implementation of the plan. As a result of the consultancy carried out in 2015 to support the process of developing the action plan and the mechanism for dialogue with civil society organizations, the main human rights recommendations from the United Nations treaty bodies and the universal periodic review were systematized and shared with

the Minister of Foreign Affairs, who is willing to import the SIMORE system from Paraguay.

36. In Ecuador, OHCHR is providing technical advice to the Government on the implementation of its SIDERECHOS online platform in preparation for drafting the State report for the universal periodic review due in 2017. OHCHR focused on strengthening civil society engagement with human rights mechanisms. Its efforts to encourage civil society organizations to interact strategically with United Nations mechanisms contributed to 13 such organizations submitting reports for the universal periodic review.

37. In Jamaica, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade and the Ministry of Justice increased their capacity to lead the interministerial coordination body on follow-up to the recommendations of human rights mechanisms. The Interministerial Committee for Human Rights, led by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade, is an ad hoc committee established for the purposes of the universal periodic review and reporting on the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, although in practice it covers the country's reporting obligations under all ratified treaties. It enhanced its capacity in the reporting process and the interactive dialogue with treaty bodies, and informally expressed an interest in the national recommendations tracking database currently under development by OHCHR.

38. In Paraguay, technical cooperation was provided to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to strengthen State capacity to monitor and report on the implementation of recommendations, particularly through the use and consolidation of SIMORE. An intensive cooperation programme was also developed to support the implementation of recommendations on combating poverty and the rights of indigenous peoples and persons with disabilities. Within the framework of the national action plan on the rights of persons with disabilities, civil society was empowered to participate in the design of public policies and in decision-making processes, including the development of human rights indicators linked to the Sustainable Development Goals. With OHCHR support, a set of indicators on the rights to education, health, food, an adequate standard of living, including housing and water, was adopted. The process included linkages to the Sustainable Development Goals, therefore ensuring an appropriate connection between development and human rights.

39. In Uruguay, OHCHR is supporting the process of implementing SIMORE and the establishment of a national mechanism for reporting and follow-up. SIMORE was expected to be fully functional from December 2016. In addition, a decree is expected to be signed and ratified by all ministries stating the responsibility of State institutions to provide information and appoint a representative to the national mechanism. It was expected that the decree would be endorsed and in force by the end of 2016.

40. The OHCHR Regional Office for South America organized a regional consultation with national universal periodic review advisers, United Nations coordination officials and United Nations resident coordinators to define regional strategies and methodologies aimed at implementing universal periodic review recommendations. A follow-up consultation with United Nations resident coordinators from six countries in the region was also supported. Its aim was to analyse the political and institutional changes in the region and their impact on human rights policies, and to discuss the challenges and opportunities for the participation of States, civil society, national human rights institutions and the United Nations system in the reviews of human rights mechanisms, Human Rights Up Front and the Sustainable Development Goals.

# IV. Financial situation of the Voluntary Fund

Table 1

**Statement of income and expenditure for the period 1 January–31 December 2016**

(United States dollars)

| *Income or expenditure* | *Total* |
|---|---|
| Income | |
| Voluntary contributions received from Governments | **503 317.91** |
| Gain/loss on exchange rate | **-1 146.07** |
| Miscellaneous and interest income | **14 541.63** |
| **Total income** | **516 713.47** |
| Expenditure | |
| Staff costs | **363 486.95** |
| Travel of staff and representatives | **51 453.68** |
| Contractual services | **56 807.72** |
| General operating expenses | **157 475.66** |
| Supplies and materials | **0** |
| Equipment, vehicles and furniture | **0** |
| Transfers and grants to implementing partners | **132.00** |
| Programme support costs | **82 036.36** |
| **Total expenditure** | **711 392.37** |
| Net excess (shortfall) of income over expenditures for the period | **-194 678.90** |
| Opening balance on 1 January 2016 | **970 950.16** |
| Miscellaneous adjustments (savings refunds to donors | **-1.79** |
| **Total fund balance as at 31 December 2016** | **776 269.47** |

Table 2

**Contributions to the Voluntary Fund for Financial and Technical Assistance in the Implementation of the Universal Periodic Review, from the establishment of the Fund to 31 December 2016**

(United States dollars)

| *Donor* | *Contribution* |
|---|---|
| Year 2008-09 | |
| Colombia | 40 000 |
| Russian Federation | 450 000 |
| United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland | 45 326 |
| Biennium 2010-2011 | |
| Germany | 148 148 |
| Morocco | 500 000 |
| Russian Federation | 200 000 |
| United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland | 133 707 |
| Biennium 2012-2013 | |
| Australia | 387 580 |
| Germany | 475 664 |
| Kazakhstan | 9 975 |
| Norway | 849 114 |

| *Donor* | *Contribution* |
|---|---|
| Biennium 2014-2015 | |
| Germany | 242 843 |
| Kazakhstan | 53 890 |
| Netherlands | 30 000 |
| Norway | 601 732 |
| Oman | 10 000 |
| Biennium 2016-2017 | |
| Germany | 109 649 |
| Republic of Korea | 25 000 |
| Norway | 238 175 |
| Saudi Arabia | 75 000 |
| Spain | 54 348 |
| **Total contributions** | **5 088 085** |

41. Table 1 shows the detailed financial situation of the Voluntary Fund as at 31 December 2016 (statement of income and expenditure).

42. Since the establishment of the Voluntary Fund in 2009, 13 countries have made financial contributions: Australia, Colombia, Germany, Kazakhstan, Morocco, the Netherlands, Norway, Oman, the Republic of Korea, the Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, Spain and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. Table 2 provides an overview of all contributions received from the establishment of the Voluntary Fund to 31 December 2016.

43. It is expected that, as the revitalized OHCHR strategic vision for follow-up support focuses on providing support to States in implementing key thematic priority recommendations in a holistic and integrated manner, the demand from States for financial support from the Voluntary Fund will continue and indeed increase. Hence, it is critical to extend the donor base and obtain additional funding in order to make a sustained impact at the country level in providing technical assistance and support to States for more effective implementation of recommendations emanating from international human rights mechanisms.

# V. Conclusions

44. **The primary responsibility for implementing recommendations of international human rights mechanisms at the country level rests with States. Hence, securing the political will of States and enhancing their ability to bring about tangible results is vital to meeting the key objective of the universal periodic review, namely, improving the human rights situation on the ground. With a view to achieving that objective, the Voluntary Fund has continued to serve as a valuable source of support for countries in the implementation of the recommendations emanating from their universal periodic review and from other international human rights mechanisms such as treaty bodies and special procedures.**

45. **The focus of OHCHR support has been on building the capacity of States to implement more effectively the recommendations of international human rights mechanisms, particularly by providing support for the establishment or strengthening of national follow-up mechanisms and processes, including inter-institutional bodies such as national mechanisms for reporting and follow-up.**

46. **OHCHR support to help national follow-up mechanisms and processes function more effectively has continued to gain traction. That support to national mechanisms for reporting and follow-up will continue in close coordination with the OHCHR treaty body capacity-building programme. Support from the Voluntary Fund will**

**focus on assisting States to fulfil their commitments to implement priority thematic human rights recommendations accepted during their universal periodic review and those from other international human rights mechanisms.**

47. **OHCHR will continue to strive to share with States and other United Nations partners several tools that are available to help integrate and mainstream the recommendations of international human rights mechanisms into their respective programmes, such as the United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks and national development action plans.**

48. **It is worth noting that OHCHR, with the advice of the Board of Trustees of the Fund, constantly reviews and updates its strategic vision for follow-up support in order to provide more effective support to States in an effort to facilitate results on the ground in terms of the promotion and protection of human rights. While OHCHR continues to take a holistic and integrated approach to its follow-up support, it seeks, through the use of money from the Voluntary Fund, to: (a) provide capacity-building to States for them to prepare meaningful national reports on implementation, through the provision of training across the spectrum of the government actors concerned; and (b) enable States to meet their commitments by focusing on supporting them to implement key thematic priority recommendations. In that regard, it is important to integrate recommendations from international human rights mechanisms into the national planning processes; to utilize international human rights recommendations for early warning and conflict prevention by integrating them into the Human Rights Up Front initiative; and to ensure that the recommendations become a crucial element in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals by integrating them into the relevant national implementation frameworks and action plans.**

49. **It is also important to encourage and secure the active participation of other stakeholders in the follow-up process, as that is key to achieving a sustained impact. Hence, various stakeholders should be able to benefit, either directly or indirectly, from the Voluntary Fund by becoming involved in the technical cooperation and assistance programme for the States that are beneficiaries of the Fund.**

50. **In order to provide technical support and assistance for follow-up more effectively, it is imperative that more contributions be made to the Voluntary Fund. With additional resources, the Fund will be able to support OHCHR to ensure the sustainability of support to States in implementing the recommendations of the international human rights mechanisms.**